

A Word From Alaska.

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The Cape Prince of Wales Mission at Alaska is the only mission sustained by the Congregational churches in all this great territory. The American Missionary Association planted this mission in 1890, and it has been continued since with an interruption of several months on account of lack of funds to carry it on. It has been reopened and the missionaries are now actively engaged in the field.

GEOGRAPHICAL.

Cape Prince of Wales is situated on the most western point of main land in the United States, only a few miles from the Arctic Circle. The country is broken and mountainous, running back from the shore of Behring Strait. Much driftwood is available here and is utilized by the missionaries in the erection of their cottages and for fuel. The station holds a good position strategically for reaching the Eskimos in the interior of Alaska. The Eskimo residents at Cape Prince of Wales are especially active and energetic for people of this race. They have been counted among the great smugglers of the North. In the reports of the United States Bureau of Education reference has been made to this fact. From Cape Prince of Wales the natives cross the Straits and carry on trade in "deer skins and sinew and wooden ware of Alaska," which they exchange "for walrus, ivory, skins of tame reindeer and whale blubber of Siberia." They also secure in this way "firearms and whiskey," neither of which prove very important factors in their Christian civilization.

INHABITANTS.

The population of Alaska by the last census was 32,052. Of these 4,298 were white people and the others largely Indian or Eskimo. At Cape Prince of Wales the permanent population amounts to something like 300. The population varies from 300 to 500. The people are largely engaged in fishing and often drift away on their rude boats and are never heard from again. Behring Strait is only fifty miles wide from Cape Prince of Wales across to East Cape, Siberia. Most providentially this mission offers wonderful opportunities for reaching these neglected thousands in eastern Siberia. This is an important consideration in holding the station at Cape Prince of Wales and pushing the missionary work with vigor. As is noted below, the natives from the region of Alaska where our mission is situated go freely back and forth to Siberia, and as soon as they shall become imbued with the spirit of aggressive Christianity they will carry the message of the gospel to these vast Siberian regions which are now in the most dense spiritual darkness.

It is estimated that nearly one-half a million immigrants from the States and other lands have gone to Alaska since the gold excitement began. This vast emigration adds greatly to the importance of maintaining and strengthening this mission.

MISSIONARY FORCE.

Messrs. W. T. Lopp and H. R. Thornton were the first missionaries in this field. They opened the work at Cape Prince of Wales in 1890. Two frame buildings were erected. One of these was occupied as their home and the other was used for school and chapel purposes. Mr. Thornton was murdered August 19, 1893. His murder was committed by some desperadoes who were soon after punished by the Eskimos themselves. His death did not indicate any



CAPE PRINCE OF WALES MISSION.

opposition on the part of the natives to the work. Mr. Lopp and his wife are now in the field. Mr. Lopp has proved very efficient in his administration. He has been commissioned by the United States Government to conduct important investigation along the coast to the north of Behring Strait. He has also charge of the reindeer herd assigned by the Government to this station, and has been commissioned to go to the North upon an expedition to relieve the whalers that are locked in the ice.

PRESENT CONDITION OF THE STATION.

Mr. Lopp was absent in the States for some months and was most cordially received by the natives upon his return. He entered immediately upon preparation for the winter. Driftwood for fuel and building purposes was rafted down the coast, which was a considerable undertaking.

His report written under date of July, 1897, contained the following interesting facts concerning this mission :

"A log-house 22x24 was finished and divided into kitchen, two bedrooms, a storeroom and hall. During the winter the house is buried in snowdrifts to the roof, making our side windows almost useless. Two sides and roof were sodded, a sod 'lean-to,' 20x12, was built on to the front in October, which is used as a vestibule, wood-house, carpenter-shop. This temporary enclosure, or 'entrance,' as we call it, was lighted by sky-windows made of clear blocks of ice. This house has proved decidedly the most comfortable and convenient house we have ever used in the Arctics.

"A house for herders was built near ours. It is the same style as ours and has been used as a home for them when in from the camp. It is hoped that these two buildings will prove object-lessons which will not be lost to this settlement. A house which

they can use both winter and summer, a compromise between their underground and the civilized house, is undoubtedly what they need.

"Mr. Thornton's monument, which was purchased in San Francisco, with funds contributed by Southport, Connecticut, friends, gave these natives a much-needed object-lesson in respecting the dead. Before taking the monument up to the grave we exhibited it at a Sunday service in Storrs' Chapel, explaining to the people its object. We also told them about visiting Mrs. Thornton and her little son and the kind words of greeting which she sent to them, and the prayerful interest which she had in them all.

"To think of Mr. Thornton lying in an Arctic grave recalled to us that he often expressed a sentiment similar to that of the African missionary, who is said to have compared pioneer mission work to building the foundation for a great bridge, and, God willing, was content to lie in an African grave as one of the unseen foundation stones.

"The school was not so well attended as in previous years. A feud between two of the principal families, brought about by distilling and drinking, and resulting in the death of two young men, and the scarcity of food, were the chief causes for decreased attendance. The school work was so divided that both day and night sessions were constantly held.

"The printing press, donated by Mrs. W. T. Hatch through the Boy's Missionary Society of the Church of the Pilgrims, Brooklyn, has been useful in enabling us to prepare supplementary lessons for the school. Some of the schoolboys have assisted in setting type and distributing it and have made some rude wood cuts which indicate that they have some undeveloped talent in that line.

"A kindergarten was established in May, con-



GROUP OF ESKIMO CHILDREN.

ducted by Mrs. Lopp. The influence which a daily kindergarten drill could exert on the lives of these innocent children who are surrounded and hampered by poverty, filth, ignorance, superstition and drunkenness, can only be imagined by those who know what it does for civilized children.

"A big Christmas box, sent by Dr. Storrs' Missionary boys—may their tribe increase—containing knit caps, nuts, pocket-knives, beads, dolls, etc., a box of ship biscuit contributed by Mrs. Thornton, and dates and raisins from our own supplies, on Christmas, made it a memorable day. [Christmas, 1896].

"Since 1894 no prizes have been given for attendance at school. One serious objection to the prize [biscuit] system was that it educated them to think we were under obligation to them for attending school.

THE RELIGIOUS WORK.

"Two sermons have been preached almost every Sunday. The Sunday-school had an average attendance of more than one hundred during the winter months. Having but four teachers, the classes were often large. We hope some of the advanced pupils will soon be able to take classes.

"It was very gratifying and sometimes amusing to see the interest taken in the collection boxes every Sunday. Lead, powder, caps, cartridges, spoons, matches, muskrat, ermine and squirrel skins were contributed. We expect to use this collection to build a small mission house in the neighboring settlement where driftwood is plentiful.

REINDEER HERD.

"The mission herd of reindeer has passed successfully through the three winters and now numbers about 360. It has been free from diseases which have afflicted seriously the Government herd at Port Clarence. To milk a cow, they lasso her and throw

her to the ground. The milk has no unfavorable or distasteful flavor, and is highly prized by us who have had to depend upon the 'tin cow' so many years. The herders live in deerskin tents. Our herders consist of six men. With but fifty-four dollars' worth of goods and supplies it required close managing to feed and clothe nine people one year. These six herders should have been permitted to devote their entire time to herding, driving and breaking, but the limited amount of supplies compelled us to use one or two in turns at the Cape to hunt and work. With our nets and rifles we got some white whale, seals and fish, and in June, walruses, which kept them supplied. Each of them now owns between thirty-five and forty-five deer, and we hope, in a year or two, when they can live independent of mission support, that the influence which they will exert as Christian deermen will do much toward leading the natives along this coast 'out of darkness into light.' What a pleasure when visiting in camp to see them bow their heads and offer thanks to God before eating; to lead them in a little prayer-meeting where every one joins, and to sing with them, 'A Tent or a Cottage, Why Should I Care?'

"Go-ten-um, who is about twenty-one, is considered the best deerman. He is of mechanical turn of mind, and made the woodcuts for the *Eskimo Bulletin*.

"A trip on reindeer sleds with Kiv-yearz-ruk through the mountains to Port Clarence was made in January. While there we had an opportunity to visit the Government herd, talk with the Laplanders, and assist in two services on Sunday, which were well attended.

"Our people have not prospered as in previous winters. A threateued epidemic in the fall, together with the 'hoodoos' which followed, partly accounted for this. Distilling and drunkenness throughout the

year often prevented many from making the most of a favorable wind. The walrus season has not been favorable. But at this writing they have all well-filled meat-houses.

"We rejoice that the reindeer herd will give a livelihood to the people for the next few years, and this influence may be far-reaching.

"In conclusion, we wish to thank our many friends for their kind letters and their prayerful interest in this work. We feel especially grateful to the few churches and friends who have shown by their gifts that they believe that these poor Eskimos were included in Matthew xxviii:19. Surely none can be more in need of the gospel than these. With this burden upon our hearts, we pray God that in the future this mission may receive the support which we think its importance deserves."

This mission in Alaska is entirely supported by special contributions given for this purpose and so designated. Now that the attention of the whole business world is turned toward the development of this great territory of our country, in the discovery of gold, should not Christian interest be also greatly stirred to the reinforcement of this missionary work carried on by the American Missionary Association in Cape Prince of Wales, Alaska?

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ESKIMOS AND MISSIONARY.